

# Income tax filing deadline only days away

*Free service available  
for Redstone community*

**By Capt. WILLIAM CARPENTER**  
*Tax assistance officer*

With less than a month remaining in the tax season, eligible clients are encouraged to schedule an appointment with the Redstone Tax Center by calling 842-1040.

During the first seven weeks of opera-

tion, the 2003 Tax Center has prepared more than 2,178 federal and state returns, which has saved clients in the Redstone community more than \$203,269 in tax preparation and filing fees; and the tax center has recovered more than \$1.3 million in refunds for its clients. The tax center can prepare returns for any state that requires filing. In addition, the center can e-file federal returns and most state returns for faster receipt of refunds.

The center is staffed by three full-time

income tax preparers: Sgt. Bryan Smith of MEDDAC, Spec. Albert Newsome of HHC, Garrison and PFC Christine Noriega of Delta Company, 832nd Ordnance Battalion. The center also has the following part-time income tax preparers: 1st Lt. Timothy Horning, 1st Lt. Billy Whigham, and SSgt. Louis McGee (all members of Alpha Company 131st), Randy Duff, Estan Rodriguez, David Wyatt, JoAnna Brunson, Cindy Van Rassen and Deborah Carpenter. The center's officer-in-charge, Capt. William Carpenter, and NCO-in-charge, Sgt. Brad Silvia, supervise all center personnel.

Clients seeking tax preparation assistance should bring the following items to their appointment: all Form W-2s, 1098s, 1099s and other reportable forms received for the 2002 tax year; Social Security cards for all family members; bank routing number and account number for direct deposit; a copy of last year's tax return (if available); dependent care provider information to include name, address, phone number and EIN or SSN (if applicable); any records of deductible expenses that you wish to claim on your return; and records reflecting the dates and prices for both the sale and purchase of any stock or other investments sold in 2002.

Center personnel will analyze whether it is in the client's best interest to claim itemized deductions (i.e. mortgage interest, real estate taxes, un-reimbursed medical expenses, charitable contributions, etc.) or take the standard deduction. The most advantageous filing status and deduction



Photo by Claus Martel/AMCOM

## *Spring scene*

**Warm, sunny weather paints a pleasing landscape of the Sparkman Center courtyard March 27.**

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# Taxes

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status will be chosen to result in the lowest tax liability and highest tax refund, if applicable. Every taxpayer is eligible to take a standard deduction in an amount according to his or her filing status. For example, a married couple filing a joint return for 2002 is allowed a standard deduction equal to \$7,850; a single person \$4,700; married filing separate \$3,925; and head of household \$6,900. Unless your individual deductions (also called "itemized" expenses) add up to more than your applicable standard deduction amount, it makes no sense to use itemized deductions. Nonetheless, some expenses such as moving expenses, traditional IRA contributions, qualified student loan interest deductions, and alimony paid will give rise to a deduction even if a taxpayer takes the standard deduction, because receipt of these types of deductions is not contingent upon itemizing deductible expenses.

The center has e-filed more than 95 percent of client returns this season, which typically results in much faster processing of federal and state returns than paper returns. The center's web site located at <http://www.redstone.army.mil/legal/tax-center.html> provides an "Online IRS Refund Status Check" link and a wealth of other tax related information. While many state tax refunds are processed as quickly as federal returns, remember that most states have a separate refund schedule from the IRS, and clients can also access their state's Department of Revenue resources through the center's web site. Some clients misunderstand the effect of e-filing their returns, and they do not want to e-file because they mistakenly believe that e-filing makes their

taxes due earlier than filing a paper return. However, e-filing has no effect whatsoever on the date that federal or state income taxes are due (i.e. April 15 is the due date for any federal taxes owed), which means that an e-filed return will only save time and postage versus filing a paper return. Please note that some returns may not be eligible for e-filing for other reasons (i.e. Alabama does not allow e-filing nonresident returns). The IRS and most state departments of revenue strongly encourage taxpayers to utilize e-filing whenever possible.

While the center's free federal and state income tax preparation and e-filing services represent a great deal that is hard to beat, this year's center has in fact done just that. The center has made its services even more valuable through promotional partnership incentives with the Post Exchange, Commissary, and Morale Welfare and Recreation. At the end of the tax season, we will draw for one winner of a \$100 gift certificate to the PX, and various denominations of seven gift certificates to the Commissary. The center is also providing 10 unit, prepaid long distance calling cards for its customers, which is provided courtesy of the PX; and the center is randomly distributing MWR coupons to clients who utilize the center (while supplies last). As the center OIC, I would like to personally acknowledge each of these organizations and express my sincere appreciation for their generous support of the center's clients in the Redstone community. The center would also like to thank Army Community Service for its generous financial support in providing needed center supplies.

Avoid the final rush prior to April 15 and schedule an appointment now. The center's personnel are looking forward to serving you.